

**FINAL REPORT TO THE AMERICAN TRADER TRUSTEE COUNCIL FOR
THE PROJECT:**

**Protection and Restoration of Brown Pelicans and other Seabirds on
Los Coronados, Todos Santos and San Benito Islands, Baja California,
Mexico**

by: Island Conservation
24 May 2004

SUMMARY:

The main goals of this project were to remove burros from Los Coronado, Todos Santos, and San Benito Islands and goats from Los Coronado Islands. This project was designed to protect seabirds breeding and roosting on these islands and increase available habitat to enable population growth. Additional benefits of this project include the protection of native and endemic plant species, increasing plant cover to reduce soil erosion, and helping restore the islands as functional ecosystems without non-native mammals.

Goats and burros were removed from Los Coronado Islands in Fall 2003 and burrows from Todos Santos Island in Spring 2004. The removal of burros from San Benito Islands has been arranged and is scheduled to take place in June 2004.

INTRODUCTION:

The Los Coronado, Todos Santos, and San Benito Islands support large populations of breeding and roosting seabirds that are significant portions of California Island seabird metapopulations. Conservation action to restore seabirds across the California Islands has been focused on protecting breeding and roosting habitat. One of the most effective methods has been to remove non-native mammals that impact seabirds on many levels including direct predation, disturbance, and habitat degradation. Non-native herbivores can negatively impact seabirds by consuming and trampling native vegetation used for nesting habitat and causing direct disturbance of nesting and roosting birds. This report covers the activities of Island Conservation to remove burros from Los Coronado, Todos Santos, and San Benito Islands and goats from Los Coronado Islands.

Los Coronado Islands:

Between September and October 2003 Island Conservation and the *Grupo de Ecología y Conservación de Islas* (GECI) made two visits to Coronado Sur Island to remove the feral goats. This action was successful and follow up visits in November 2003 and April 2004 have confirmed that goats have been removed from the island. In November 2003 we launched a joint effort with the Mexican Secretary of Communications and Transportation (SCT) and the Mexican Navy to remove the burros from Coronado Sur. This effort was successful.

Todos Santos Islands:

In Spring 2004 Island Conservation purchased two motorized carts and had them imported into Mexico. The *Grupo de Ecología y Conservación de Islas* officially donated these carts to the Secretary of Communications and Transportation to replace the burros used to carry diesel to the generators that power the lighthouses. GECI received an official letter from SCT acknowledging the receipt of these carts and promising to not introduce beasts of burden to the islands in the future. Training in the use and maintenance of these carts was provided in Ensenada. In May 2004 one cart was brought to Todos Santos Island aboard a SCT boat and offloaded on the island. The burrows were removed from the island, hoisted onto the SCT boat and returned to Ensenada where they are now living on a ranch owned by members of SCT.



SCT tries out the new motorized cart on Todos Santos Island.



SCT offloads the burros in Ensenada after removing them from Todos Santos Island.

The Mexican Navy has a permanently attended radio station on Todos Santos Island. Because they also occasionally used the burros to transport heavy loads they will also benefit from the motorized carts we brought to the island. A side benefit of this collaboration has been the Navy's involvement in an island clean-up effort carried out in May 2004. Illegal fish camps have been operating on Todos Santos Sur for many years. The Navy agreed to provide transportation and personnel to assist GECI and a group of university students from Ensenada to remove the trash and illegal huts from the island. Photos documenting these activities are

included in the attached presentation.

San Benito Islands:

When the proposal for this project was written SCT was in the final stages of finishing a new lighthouse that was to be powered by solar energy. Unfortunately SCT ran out of money and is fitting the new light with a diesel powered generator. Because of this we have had to arrange with SCT to provide a motorized cart to replace the burros on San Benito. This involved several trips to the island to assess the terrain for using the cart and some modifications to the current trail to allow the cart to make it to the lighthouse carrying diesel. In May 2004 we received an official letter from SCT accepting the motorized cart and stating that the burros will be removed from the island no later than June 2004. The cart will be delivered to the island in late May or the first week of June 2004. As on Todos Santos Island, SCT will provide a boat to deliver the cart and the

burros will be taken off the island alive. ICEG personnel will supervise and provide training for using and maintaining the carts on the island.

Conclusion:

We have successfully completed the proposed actions on Los Coronado and Todos Santos Islands and will finish the work on San Benito Islands within one month. Our ability to carry out this project within one year of first receiving the permission from SCT and the Mexican Navy has been important in maintaining institutional support from these agencies. This has especially been the case for Los Coronado Islands where recent developments in plans to build a Liquid Natural Gas re-gasification facility have increased publicity and political interest in these islands. We feel that it would be politically more difficult at this time to carry out this project on Los Coronado Islands and it is fortunate the project is completed. Furthermore, the involvement of the Mexican Navy and SCT in this conservation action has raised awareness of the importance of these islands and these groups are now opposing the proposed LNG platform at Los Coronado.

The Navy's and SCT's support for further protection of Los Coronado Islands was an unexpected benefit, as was the Navy's support for the removal of illegal fishing camps from Todos Santos Islands. We feel the future involvement of government agencies will continue to foster a sense of ownership and protection for these islands and help protect seabird habitat in the long term.

Species protected by this project:

Table 1. Numbers and status of breeding seabirds on Los Coronados, Todos Santos, and San Benito islands. B= breeding in unknown numbers; E=extirpated.

Species	Los Coronado	Todos Santos	San Benito	CA Listing	US Listing	Mexico Listing
Leach's Storm-petrel	>200	-	1,200,000			THREATENED
Ashy Storm-petrel	10	-	-	SPECIAL CONCERN	SPECIAL CONCERN	THREATENED
Black Storm-petrel	500	-	580,000	SPECIAL CONCERN		THREATENED
Least Storm-petrel	-	-	270,000			THREATENED
Brown Pelican	1,200	E	394	ENDANGERED	ENDANGERED	
Double-crested Cormorant	?	236	126	SPECIAL CONCERN		
Brandt's Cormorant	40	368	158			
Pelagic Cormorant	2	6	-			
Western Gull	B	2800	1150			
Heermann's Gull	-	-	200			THREATENED
Xantus's Murrelet	2,000	125	1,000	THREATENED CANDIDATE		ENDANGERED
Craveri's Murrelet	-	-	<1,000			
Cassin's Auklet	B	B	75,000			THREATENED
TOTAL	>4,000	>3,500	>2,100,000			